Neale, a Fry Gallery Trustee, for pointing out that Roger Fry had an uncle, who was part of the Bristol and chocolate side of the family, and is thereby distantly linked. He was also a first cousin to Anthony Fry.

Dr Jane Cole, who has been transcribing the Gibson diaries, has helped by drawing attention to the close friendship while at University College, London of Francis Gibson's son ,"Frank", with one of the Fry family in Bristol. This may have contributed, along with the mutual friendship of the families, to Lewis Fry ultimately marrying his sister. Dr Cole has also confirmed that what became Bridge End Gardens were not open to the public during the Gibson family lifetime. The date from which public access began can be more definitely linked to 1866 when the Garden passed to their daughter, who had married Lewis Fry in 1858. She died in 1870.

Forty-eight years later her son, Lewis G Fry, wrote in 1918 to the Saffron Walden Corporation on behalf of his father (then aged 86 and no longer an MP), to say that his father regretted to say that he was "unable to keep the Gardens at Bridge End open to the public, as has been the case during about half a century", and that he proposed to close them two months later. While it is a pity that he was not more specific about the length of time exactly as 50 years takes us back to 1868 - two years after the Fry family inherited the Gardens. And if the decision to maintain the Gardens at their expense whilst living in Bristol but to allow public access was taken (as is quite possible) two years earlier - at the time it was inherited - we can postulate that 2021 marks the 155th anniversary of public access.

Three months after Fry's letter was received the Corporation concluded a three- year lease at a nominal rent of £l per year. This beneficial arrangement has substantially been continued by subsequent municipal authorities and by subsequent generations of the Fry family, ever since. The Fry Art Gallery has been part of this superb example of public spirited generosity on the part of the owners, reciprocated by the continued good sense of local councillors, thus ensuring the maintenance of a fine garden that has long been enjoyed by local people. Latterly there has been an increasing number of visitors attracted by the completion of restoration work in 2008, making it into a Grade II* Registered Garden.

Nigel Weaver

The next newsletter will be in March 2021.

Don't forget that you can follow our news on Facebook and Twitter, as well as our blog at *fryartgallery.blog*

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THE FRY ART GALLERY

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2020

THE FRY ART GALLERY SOCIETY

For the Fry Art Gallery, continuing to function during these turbulent times national requirements had to be first comprehended and then acted upon by the 70 or so individuals whose voluntary work as trustees, invigilators or helpers put the wheels into motion on behalf of all members of the Fry Art Gallery Society, and ultimately the world at large.

It is therefore satisfying to be able to report that we have coped!

We have continued to progress- albeit at a slower speed than we might have wished and with a reduction in sales income - but nevertheless we have opened this year, now with an extended exhibiting season for the two excellent current displays, the Appeal is well under way and we are preparing for the Annual Sale. Next year we hope to be able to start work on the extension.

Those unable to come to the Gallery this season might like to see our own social distancing notice (with apologies to Edward Bawden)

Re-opening

We are delighted to report that we were able to re-open on 31st August. Covid-19 regulations mean that we have had to limit visitors to ten per hour, pre-booked through our website, *www.fryartgallery.org* but The Art Fund have provided a (free of charge) on-line booking system.

280 visitors arrived during our first two weeks. Comprehending the often confusing and contradictory advice took a great deal of effort, but over

forty of our volunteer invigilators (who have additionally had to shoulder sanitizing work between admitting the public), have returned.

Like everything else in the country currently it has been a different experience when visiting, firstly because of the necessity for a timed entrance, and secondly because, with only 10 visitors each hour, it has been a rather hushed experience. The plus side has been the opportunity to take one's time in viewing the two first-class exhibitions on display, *Random Spectacular* and *Walter Hoyle: a versatile artist.*

There has been a great deal of interest in these, so we shall open additionally at weekends from Saturday 7th November until Sunday 6th December. We shall, though, be closing at 4pm, so 3pm will be the latest admission. Again, you must book in advance.

The New Building and the Appeal.

By September 18th the Appeal had reached £367,000 which is very encouraging and we are particularly grateful to those members and supporters who have so far contributed £120,000 of this sum The estimated cost of the extension is £420,000 and so we still need to raise £53,000. Three charitable Trusts are still considering our application. **The Appeal remains open and we hope that those members who intend to subscribe a sum of whatever amount will do so by December 1st.** Thereafter there can be a realistic final assessment before proceeding to seek tenders.

Annual General Meeting

Because of the uncertain times, we have decided to make this year's Annual General Meeting a postal affair. Please complete and let us have the enclosed proxy forms by 17th October. The results of the ballot will be confirmed at a meeting of the Trustees on 20th October.

The report and accounts for the year to December 31st 2019 are available to download from our website ***www.fryartgallery.org/ReportandAccounts2019.pdf*** or else by requesting a hard copy via ***info@fryartgallery.org*** . The formal agenda is enclosed.

Annual Sale

The Annual Sale is our biggest fund-raising event of the year and the good news is that despite an unprecedented year the Annual Sale will still be going ahead but with a different format. To reflect current guidelines on visitor numbers the event will span seven days rather than two - from 14th-20th November in Fry Gallery Too. It has to be a pre-booked only event (via our website) so there cannot be a Private View this year. However, there is a chance to leisurely see the works of art without the usual crowd! Please see the enclosed card for further details. We already have an exciting list of artists signed up to exhibit, old friends and new. The organisers look forward to seeing you there.

Acquisitions

In the March 2020 Newsletter we reported on recent acquisitions and reference was made to a print made by Ian Auld, although his reputation was as a potter. Since then two Auld pots have been purchased, which has strengthened the ceramic section of the Permanent Collection, as well as helping us to re-evaluate the significance, hitherto not fully recognised, of a spontaneous gathering of important contemporary potters in North West Essex between 1957 and 2003. Auld, who lived first in Wimbish and later in Toppesfield, and Dan Arbeid, who lived in Wendens Ambo between 1960 and 1983, were both ground-breaking potters of their generation. Work by Auld's wife, Gillian Lowndes, who has been described as the most influential British potter of the 20th century, has still to find its way into the Collection. Alan Spencer Green also lived in Wimbish in 1963, and his work is characterised by thrown individual pieces and shell porcelain. Currently work by all three are on display in the *Random Spectacular* exhibition, while the Gallery's representation of work by Grayson Perry (who spent some of his childhood years in Great Bardfield) *Whore of Essex I Love Thee* (1986) is currently on loan to the Grayson Perry exhibition "*The Pre-therapy Years*" at the Holburne Museum in Bath.

Other new additions include donated items by the Edward Bawden estate of his trilby hat and a tie and the purchase of a pen and ink drawing for the book *Hold Fast by YourTeeth.*

Reviews

It is customary to include at least one item other than of the "parish notices" variety and the three reviews that follow continues that tradition.

The books reviewed are all available in the gallery, but additionally we are offering to post them if requested. Anne Ullmann's book may be purchased direct from the publisher (Fleece Press 95, Denby Lane, Upper Denby, Huddersfield HD8 8TZ) £242 but please quote the Fry Art Gallery when doing so. Copies of *Random Spectacular 17* are obtainable from us at £18 plus £4 pp . The book on Walter Hoyle is £10 plus £3. Please mark your orders as Book Sales and enclose a cheque.

The guest reviews are by Brian Webb, whose company Webb & Webb has served the Gallery since inception with their high quality designs; and by Stephen Mead, who previously worked in the Royal Opera House.

Hornet & Wild Rose, the Art of Tirzah Garwood by Anne Ullmann, published by The Fleece Press, 2020.

All the best reviews begin 'the subject of this book needs no introduction'. In this case nor will the author or publisher.

There can be few friends of the Fry Art Gallery who don't know the work of Tirzah Garwood, more often than not through the work of her husband, Eric Ravilious. Now Anne Ullman, their daughter, completes the series of books that started with her

mother's autobiography, *Long Live Great Bardfield*, and before that her editing of the three volumes of her father's letters and work as an artist and designer; all published to a no-expense-spared standard by The Fleece Press.

It sounds like there could be very little left to say about Eric and Tirzah, but *A Hornet & Wild Rose*, Anne Ullman's new book completes the story - at least for the time being.

While *Long Live Great Bardfield* is very much the account of Eric and Tirzah's life together from Tirzah's diaries, very little has been written about her work as an artist, wood engraver, illustrator, paper marbler and maker of 'little houses' (Tirzah's description of her framed three dimensional models). And, until this book, nothing on her working method.

The early chapters briefly describe Tirzah's (born Eileen Garwood, the third child, hence Tirzah) childhood and go on to describe her starting at Eastbourne Art School at the age of seventeen. There she met Eric Ravilious, a recent graduate from the Royal College of Art, who had taken up a teaching post back in Eastbourne where he had also been at art school. Tirzah, we imagine with Eric's encouragement, showed outstanding talent as a wood engraver. But having Eric as a teacher certainly did not influence her imagination. Her subject matter shows observation in detail and a sardonic wit. A later engraving from 1935 illustrates her vision, *The Man Who was Answered by His Own Self* is a brilliant 'frozen moment'. The shock to the man who hears his own voice coming down the line has thrown him back, arms and legs in all directions, a chair knocked over by his twisted leg (or maybe arm?). Tirzah has purposely avoided perspective. Books, like little angry birds, fly out of the picture. Against this frenetic action are the background textiles and wallpapers that look like they have been designed by Tirzah especially for the engraving.

On the opposite page of the book, perfectly immobile, is a still-life engraving of cactus plants from 1933. The sharp spines of the prickly pear and other spiky cacti contrast with smooth succulents, and again the background looks like another Tirzah-designed textile. Cacti must have been a joint interest. Eric had engraved a bookplate for the plant collector Roger Bevan a couple of years earlier.

In the chapters after talking about her work as a wood engraver Anne describes Tirzah's designs for pattern and marble papers. Anne has thoroughly researched her mother's wood-engraved and drawn pattern papers and has identified many which were assumed to be by Eric. There is also an illustrated section of brilliant hand-marbled papers that Tirzah and Charlotte Bawden made and sold commercially. The Second World War ended the enterprise and with the death of Eric on active service and three children to bring up working was made impossible.

A move of home in 1944 brought on a rush of creativity. Tirzah took up oil painting and an interest in her local surroundings resulted in a series of oil paintings, village houses, prim villas, shops and chapels. Based on Victorian dioramas which she no doubt saw in junk shops, possibly even Eric's father's shop in Eastbourne, she built cardboard and paint models of buildings surrounded by cut out trees and shrubbery printed from real leaves.

An Essex House, one of Tirzah's constructions together with several paintings was shown in the *Mr & Mrs Ravilious* exhibition at the Fry in 2019 and Anne has contributed *Tirzah's Little Houses 1* to *Random Spectacular* published by St. Jude's in association with the Fry Art Gallery to coincide with the Fry's current exhibition. These three dimensional works, like her oil paintings, which Tirzah continued to paint often in bed with the canvas propped up on her knees, have a very knowing folk art quality. *Hornet &Wild Rose*, from 1950, painted in the nursing home near Marks Tey where she died in 1951, perfectly sums up Tirzah's life.

Brian Webb

WALTER HOYLE-a versatile artist. Edited by Julia and Andrew Collins, published by Bread & Butter Press, 2020.

The sub-title of this book – "a versatile artist"- is important when reminded of the dictionary definition of versatile, ie "capable of dealing with many subjects". It is a widely held view that it was Michael Ayrton's undoing that he was simultaneously a sculptor, printmaker, maze-maker, designer for theatre and film, regular radio broadcaster and novelist - so much so that he failed to leave a really outstanding reputation in any particular one. Hoyle, as this book edited by Julia and Andrew Collins shows, had an estimable prowess in the fields of watercolour, printmaking, murals, advertising, wallpaper design, conversant with Byzantine art, as well as teaching. To a degree this might be seen as a weakness, akin to Ayrton, although I suspect it was more because he chose to spend 33 years in teaching, nineteen of which were spent full-time in establishing the printmaking department of the then Cambridge School of Art where he was an "inspiring" teacher (said Chloe Cheese). It is a lucky artist who can forge a national reputation alongside the time and effort involved in full time teaching. (Bawden rarely averaged more than one day weekly.)

Hoyle is also caught in what might be called "the Bardfield effect". Malcolm Yorke in his masterly and lengthy introduction to the book he and Gill Saunders edited in 2015 (*Bawden, Ravilious and the artists of Great Bardfield)* considers the question of whether there was anything approaching a Bardfield "School" in the 1950s/60s and what collective noun could be applied to a group of artists who lived in the same place and, an innovation, were publicly showing their pictures on the same walls. Ultimately Yorke leaves the question still largely unresolved, partly out of deference to the antipathy of the artists themselves, who at the time were strongly against any such labelling, and partly because, as he notes, there was no leader for such a group. Bawden, who may be credited with being the inspiration they mostly shared, was most certainly not "temperamentally suited to be a leader".

Yorke contrasts the Bardfieldians with the leadership given in St Ives by Ben Nicholson in creating the avant-garde of British abstractionism, noting that the former pursued the English tradition of landscape painting, and poses a different question: whether they represented the opposite to St Ives and were the *"arriere-garde"* for representational art and the traditional values of drawing and craftsmanship." He comments that stylistically at any rate there were no Expressionists in Great Bardfield. What he does note is that seven out of the ten painters in the village shared a belief in depicting the rural landscape in a representational manner using traditional media, and that three of them were directly trained by Bawden, With the benefit of time we can see that they (Hoyle, Sheila Robinson, Bernard Cheese) are all liable to the "Bardfield effect" of being over-shadowed nevertheless by the reputation and long-lasting public interest in their non-leader.

Hoyle was also disadvantaged in not having the benefit of a relationship with a commercial gallery that would have brought his name regularly to the fore. As Chloe Cheese notes elsewhere in her contribution to the book there was also in the 1960's a "loss of interest from London galleries as the art scene moved on" from the traditional approach still largely followed by the Bardfield artists . Added to that is the absence of any evaluation of his work, save this collection of essays, twenty years after his death.

But this publication, produced by Emma Mason, a gallerist in Eastbourne, and the Fry Art Gallery, published by her husband's Bread and Butter Press, is timely and important. It includes assessments by Emma Mason and Chloe Cheese, plus the benefit of a lengthy autobiographical contribution drafted in 1996 but hitherto unseen, which sits nicely alongside an interview conducted by Martin Salisbury and published in 2000 in the journal of the Department of Art & Design of Anglia Ruskin University. All five contributions, including the foreword by his widow, inevitably traverse much common ground, but what comes through is the breadth of Hoyle's interests, his attainments and some insight about the "happiest" and most "marvellous" times (Hoyle) that he spent working and living in Great Bardfield.

St Jude's Random Spectacular no.17

This handsome slim format paperback sets out to echo the spirit of the Fry Gallery's exhibition, and is an entertainment in itself. Some forty or so curators (is there a collective noun for such a group ?) contribute their own thoughts and art inspired by their choices, some witty, some personal, some researched but always interesting. Good to kick off with Jonny Hannah's homage to Sheila Robinson, who also provides the inspiration for Ed Kluz's striking *Work Prospects*. Chloe Cheese's *Moules de Bouchot, Dieppe* leads Jake Tilson to a series of elaborate fishy-inspired Japanese prints This pleasure in art as entertainment is splendidly exemplified by Jonathan Gibbs's wood engravings for *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard*.

George Saumarez Smith contributes some finely executed architectural drawings from his sketchbooks, reminiscent of Ruskin's *Stones in Venice* in their detail. A lively contrast comes from Emily Sutton's *capriccio* of Whitby following a pair of Edward Bawden images. Mark Hearld delights in a gallimaufry of poultry. On the animal front Maggi Hambling introduces a happy frog by John Norris Wood. Chloe Cheese as a contributor has a short reminiscence of her early home life, and a striking monoprint of *Vegetable Market and Masked Child*, made this year - the child wears a sinister Venetian beaked plague mask - the composition reflecting Michael Rothenstein's economy.

Nearer "home" Angie Lewin's thoughts on Ravilious and Wedgwood leads on to some spirited images in several mediums, Anne Ullmann contributes a useful essay on Tirzah Garwood's house pictures, and Alan Powers considers Kenneth Rowntree's *Alphabet* for Edinburgh Weavers, contrasted with that of Ravilious. Along the way there are delightful brief encounters with other Great Bardfield residents.

The most scholarly contribution is the extended essay by Oliver Soden, who has researched the work of David Myerscough-Jones with particular reference to his designs for televised opera. The culmination of this specialised work was his conversion of Snape Maltings to a studio/set for Britten's film of his *Peter Grimes*. This would seem to be a subject for further exploration.

Perhaps for such a large format publication, some of the images seen unnecessarily cropped. Jeff Fisher's jeu d'esprit on Edwin Smith's photograph of *The Pope's Seat* would have benefited from a sight of the original, and a pity too, that a welcome mention of Olive Cook's often overlooked collages by Michelle Thompson could have been improved by a better chosen detail from her *Surrealist Collage*, if not shown in its entirety.

Do not be discouraged by these minor quibbles. Copies of *Random Spectacular 17* are available from the Gallery and you will find it rewarding if a visit in these strange times is difficult. With an inevitable drop in visitors due to Covid-19 , and the development of the Gallery becoming nearer to reality, I suggest a generous donation and request for the exhibition hand-list be included. Not only does this have a full list of items, but also the Gallery acquisition numbers which I found most interesting. The entries also name each curator/selector, often with a few short notes, including a reminiscence by Iris Weaver from the early days of the Fry, and a brief description of a Ravilious watercolour by David Gentleman, so succinct and yet so vivid it is (almost) unnecessary to see the picture!

Stephen Mead

"Why Fry?"

The item in the last Newsletter stimulated a number of respondents, and perhaps justifies a short addendum. Firstly, a correction: it was Jeremy Collingwood, not John, who wrote the Gibson book. I am also indebted to Philip